



# PENINSULA FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB INC.

Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, Australia

## NEWSLETTER: DECEMBER 2015

### **The Briars, Mt Martha 5<sup>th</sup> October**

The Briars had been closed for rabbit control on our scheduled visit last month, so our birding was rescheduled to this month. Seven members gathered on a fine warm day, with only a light breeze – ideal conditions. Sue in the Visitor Centre gave a few tips on recent sightings, then we set out first to the bird hides. A few ducks, including hardheads, were seen on the first pond, as well as nesting swans and a Great Egret. The Ringtail Possum was curled up in his corner over our heads.



*Echidna taking a bath – Photo by Diane Peters*

There were a few more birds, including Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants, Swamphens, Coots and a White-faced Heron on the larger pond, but with a very high water level no shore birds like Dotterels were to be seen.

At the new bridge over the creek there was a multitude of honeyeaters, including White-naped, Yellow-faced and New Holland; Golden and Rufous Whistlers were heard and eventually seen. At the wetland lookout a flock of about a dozen European Goldfinches made several fly-pasts, and a Swamp Harrier was seen soaring over the paddocks.

Along the Kur-ber-rer walk we encountered both Shining and

Horsefields Bronze-Cuckoo, the latter heard but not sighted, but the former posing for photographs close by on a bare tree. There was a close encounter with a Striated Pardalote. Further along the boardwalk the people at the front spotted a Bassian Thrush, and produced photographic evidence to back up their claim, while Dusky Wood-swallows and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes had also returned. Along the back track one of the resident Emus appeared. No koalas were sighted, but there were two Echidnas – one taking a paddle in the dam.



*Photo by Diane Peters*

The final bird count was 56, with the highlights being the Bronze-cuckoo and Striated Pardalote. Also sighted were several Spotted Jezebel butterflies (aka Wood White) as well as Painted Ladies. - Lee Denis

#### **Bird List For The Briars 5<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

Emu	Swamp Harrier	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	White-naped Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird
Black Swan	Brown Goshawk	Laughing Kookaburra	New Holland Honeyeater	Australian Magpie
Australian Wood Duck	Purple Swamphen	Superb Fairy-wren	Eastern Spinebill	Little Raven
Pacific Black Duck	Eurasian Coot	Spotted Pardalote	Eastern Yellow Robin	European Goldfinch
Chestnut Teal	Masked Lapwing	Striated Pardalote	Golden Whistler	Welcome Swallow
Hardhead	Spotted Turtle-Dove	White-browed Scrubwren	Rufous Whistler	Bassian Thrush
Little Pied Cormorant	Crested Pigeon	Brown Thornbill	Grey Shrike-thrush	Common Blackbird
Little Black Cormorant	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Red Wattlebird	Magpie-Lark	Common Myna
White-faced Heron	Rainbow Lorikeet	Noisy Miner	Grey Fantail	
Great Egret	Eastern Rosella	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Willie Wagtail	
Australian White Ibis	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	White-eared Honeyeater	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	
Straw-necked Ibis	Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	White-plumed Honeyeater	Dusky Woodswallow	

## Bird watching for Beginners

### 9<sup>th</sup> October

As part of Frankston City Council's Seniors Week activities we hosted an introduction to Bird Watching at Seaford Wetlands on October 9. We had 9 new participants as well as 3 Club members, led by Heather Ducat, who lives near the wetland and knows it well.

We started at Austins Rd bird watching platform where we saw the usual waterbirds and ducks. We walked over to the Wells Rd side and then through the middle of the wetland, and back along the southern edge to Austins Rd. None of the participants had been through the centre before, and

were interested to try the middle-of-wetland experience. You don't get to see large expanses of water as you would expect, just glimpses of water through the masses of tall reeds, with golden-headed cisticolas popping up occasionally.

The highlight of the day was a spotted pardalote at its nest in a mud bank. We saw 33 birds altogether, fewer than we usually see, which is always the way when you go to show off your favourite spot! - **Judy Smart**

---

## Michelle Thomas

### Animals' Role in the Environment

### 14<sup>th</sup> October

Michelle is the founder of the Animalia Wildlife Shelter in Frankston, which rescues, repairs and releases birds, bats and all manner of mammals. She spoke tonight about the contribution animals make to the environment. Among their many roles are: leaf cleaning, pruning, pollination of flowers and seed dispersal; control of rodents and insects, and fire prevention.

Silveryeyes clean lerps from eucalyptus leaves, and sugar gliders eat lerp, and pollinate flowers. Gliders also create hollows in trees – they take a borer hole and expand it, then as it becomes too large for them it is taken over by kookaburras.

Echidnas eat termites as well as ants. Possums prune the tips off plants, making them bushy and compact. Brushtail possums prune mistletoe- Michelle told us that at Chiltern the brushtail possums were removed to encourage sugar and squirrel gliders – the unintended consequence was prolific mistletoe growth.

Cleaning up – ravens and wedge tail eagles eat dead

animals. After the 2008 bushfires wildlife rescuers followed the raven calls to find dead animals with live young which could be rescued. Tawny frogmouths eat mice whole (their soft claws cannot tear up food), then regurgitate a fur and bone ball. Magpies eat mice too. Barn owls – during mice plagues these owls breed up, then when the plague is over there are starving owls. (Michelle is concerned about a new rodenticide, which is harmless to birds, but kills animals which eat rodents).

Flying foxes are night time pollinators and seed dispersers – they prefer pollen to fruit, in spite of their reputation. Koalas eat gumnuts as well as leaves (Michelle looked after 14 koalas after the Marysville bushfires – 11 survived). Microbats are insectivores – a nursing mother eats 4500 insects per night.

Fire prevention – wombats, bandicoots and lyrebirds turn over the soil, keeping the ground clear of regrowth and open. And of course wallabies and kangaroos mow the grass. - **Judy Smart**

---

## Langwarrin FFR

### 18<sup>th</sup> October

For this excursion we joined with Ringwood Field Naturalists Club to participate in LifeSearch, which aims to provide a snapshot of the natural world over a period of one week. Seven PFNC members joined around 30 RFNC members for the day. The weather was ideal, being warm and still.

We began with a sighting of a Tawny Frogmouth (local knowledge) which became a star for ten minutes. Following the Emu-wren track to the reservoir, where a Brush Bronzewing put in an appearance, we then carried on to the Dune Track, noting birds as well as plants in flower as we went – Shining Bronze-cuckoo being the most notable bird, and Blue-spike Milkwort being a notable plant.



Brush Bronzewing – Photo by Lee Denis

Returning to the McLelland Break, sharp eyes found a good

many orchids, as well as lillies in the mown area, highlights being the Large Duck Orchids and many Sun Orchids.



Large Duck Orchid *Caleana major* – Photo by Lee Denis

After lunch the group headed down the Military Track as far as “Mistletoe Corner” at the junction with the Paperbark track. At this point the PFNC members headed off in search of the Olive-backed Oriole at the Warrandyte Rd end of the Reserve, while the RFNC members headed back to the car park via the McLelland Break to look for the Purple Diuris and Rabbit-ears Orchids.



Olive-backed Oriole – Photo by Tanya Hattingh

Our group located the Oriole, which was calling continuously, then on the way back encountered two juvenile Pied Currawongs in thick scrub along the Owen Dawson Track. We have seen and heard adult Pieds in the Reserve previously, but not juveniles – perhaps they were

dispersing from their breeding grounds? Final bird count was 34, together with 6 orchid species and a good many other plants in flower. - Lee Denis

#### Plants in Flower (lists compiled by Judy Smart)

##### Orchids

<i>Caladenia pusilla</i>	tiny fingers
<i>Caleana major</i>	large flying duck
<i>Chiloglottis valida</i>	common bird orchid (finished flowering)
<i>Microtis unifolia</i>	common onion orchid
<i>Thelymitra rubra</i>	salmon sun orchid
<i>Thelymitra ixiooides</i>	spotted sun orchid

##### Lilies

<i>Burchardia umbellata</i>	milkmaids
<i>Caesia parviflora</i>	pale grass lily
<i>Dianella</i> sp	flax-lily
<i>Patersonia occidentalis</i>	purple flag
<i>Thelionema caespitosum</i>	blue star lily
<i>Thysanotus patersonii</i>	twining fringe lily
<i>Tricoryne elatior</i>	yellow rush lily

##### Dicots

<i>Aotus ericoides</i>	common aotus
<i>Banksia marginata</i>	silver banksia
<i>Comesperma calymega</i>	blue spike milkwort
<i>Comesperma volubile</i>	love creeper
<i>Correa reflexa</i>	common correa
<i>Dillwynia glaberrima</i>	smooth parrot pea
<i>Dillwynia sericea</i>	showy parrot pea
<i>Goodenia humilis</i>	swamp goodenia
<i>Hibbertia acicularis</i>	prickly guinea-flower
<i>Hibbertia fasciculata</i> var <i>prostrata</i>	bundled guinea-flower
<i>Isotoma fluviatilis</i>	swamp isotome
<i>Leptospermum continentale</i>	prickly tea-tree
<i>Leptospermum myrsinoides</i>	silky tea-tree
<i>Melaleuca squarrosa</i>	scented paperbark
<i>Olearia lirata</i>	daisy bush
<i>Pimelea humilis</i>	rice flower
<i>Poranthera microphylla</i>	small poranthera
<i>Ricinocarpus pinifolius</i>	wedding bush
<i>Stackhousia viminea</i>	slender candles
<i>Stylidium graminifolium</i>	trigger plant
<i>Trachymene composita</i> (formerly <i>anisocarpa</i> )	native parsnip

**Bird List For Langwarrin FFR 18<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

Pacific Black Duck	Tawny Frogmouth	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Rufous Whistler	Grey Butcherbird
Australian White Ibis	Laughing Kookaburra	White-eared Honeyeater	Grey Shrike-thrush	Australian Magpie
Straw-necked Ibis	Superb Fairy-wren	White-naped Honeyeater	Magpie-Lark	Pied Currawong
Brush Bronzewing	Spotted Pardalote	New Holland Honeyeater	Grey Fantail	Little Raven
Rainbow Lorikeet	Brown Thornbill	Eastern Spinebill	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	Welcome Swallow
Eastern Rosella	Red Wattlebird	Eastern Yellow Robin	Olive-backed Oriole	Common Blackbird
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	Little Wattlebird	Golden Whistler	Dusky Woodswallow	

\*\*\*\*\*

**Coolart  
9<sup>th</sup> November**

Seven members attended on a fine, warm, still day. Birds seemed scarce, so much so that some disappointment was expressed, until the surprising tally of 57 was totted up.

First destination was the lagoon, with a close watch out for Sacred Kingfisher (heard but not seen) and Boobook (not heard or seen). White Ibis were on the lagoon, but the Ibis have not bred there this year, said to be because of the dry conditions. There were Blue-billed Ducks and Shelducks as well as Grey and Chestnut Teal, three species of Cormorant (a fourth, Little Pied, was later spotted at the beach), Swans and Hoary-headed Grebe. The water level was very low, with what in previous years had been island with nesting Ibis now just slight hillocks on the dry bed.

Leaving the hide we went looking for the Blue-winged Parrot seen at a recent bird count – but without success. There were the usual bush birds, including Goldfinch, Spotted Pardalote, Red-browed Finch, Shining Bronze-cuckoo and several raptors over the paddocks – Brown Goshawk, Nankeen Kestrel and Swamp Harrier. There were few honeyeaters – besides Wattlebirds, only Yellow-faced Honeyeater and Eastern Spinebill. Little Grassbirds were heard in the reeds, while Reed-Warblers were sighted.

A notable sighting was Pied Currawong – these birds are being reported more and more on the Peninsula. An echidna was also

sighted near the hide, and on investigating the woolshed where a Willie Wagtail was seen flying in and out, its nest was located.



Hooded Plover – Photo by Tanya Hattingh

On the beach there was a pair of Red-capped Plovers and a pair also of Hooded Plovers – possibly nesting. Both of the latter were leg-flagged, and enquiries elicited the information that both were banded on Phillip Island in January 2014. - **Lee Denis**

**Bird List For Coolart 9 November 2015**

Blue-billed Duck	Australian White Ibis	Common Bronzewing	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Skylark
Black Swan	Straw-necked Ibis	Galah	Eastern Spinebill	Red-browed Finch
Australian Shelduck	Swamp Harrier	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Eastern Yellow Robin	European Goldfinch
Pacific Black Duck	Brown Goshawk	Eastern Rosella	Golden Whistler	Welcome Swallow
Grey Teal	Nankeen Kestrel	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	Grey Shrike-thrush	Clamorous Reed-Warbler
Chestnut Teal	Purple Swamphen	Laughing Kookaburra	Magpie-Lark	Little Grassbird
Hoary-headed Grebe	Dusky Moorhen	Sacred Kingfisher	Grey Fantail	Common Blackbird
Little Pied Cormorant	Eurasian Coot	Superb Fairy-wren	Willie Wagtail	Common Starling
Pied Cormorant	Red-capped Plover	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Butcherbird	Common Myna
Little Black Cormorant	Hooded Plover	Brown Thornbill	Australian Magpie	
Great Cormorant	Silver Gull	Red Wattlebird	Pied Currawong	
White-faced Heron	Spotted Turtle-Dove	Little Wattlebird	Little Raven	

**John Eichler**  
***In Search of Rare Plants***  
**11<sup>th</sup> November**

John is an old friend of the Club and spoke in 2013 on Intertidal Marine Life, plus back in the 1990s on orchids. He is a member of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, has had a focus on plants for 50 plus years, and has been chasing rarities for 40 plus years. His other interests include fungi surveys in winter and the Marine Research Group in summer, plus birds. The only field he neglects is grasses, sedges and rushes.

His information for finding rare plants comes from the Atlas of Living Australia, the Flora Information System, old botanists' notes, and friends and contacts. Some 23% of Victorian flora is rare, threatened or extinct, which is a high percentage. There are various forms of rarity, such as extinct plants re-discovered, plants that are naturally rare, some once widespread but no longer such, some that just reach Victoria but common elsewhere, and those confined to uncommon habitats.

He started with some recent finds, plants found in other States but not known in Victoria – *Boronia polygalifolia* (known from NSW and Queensland), *Caladenia bicalliat* in Portland (known from WA & SA previously), and *Astelia psychrocharis*, previously known from NSW Alps.

Extinct Plants Rediscovered: if a plant hasn't been found for 50 years it is presumed extinct. There were 9 of these re-found, including some not seen since the 1880s. For example: *Acrotriche depressa* in the Wimmera, *Caladenia pumila* near Geelong, *Pterostylis valida* near Donald, *Calotis pubescens* near Omeo (found by von Mueller in 1854) and *Leionema microphyllum* (formerly *Phebalium*) in the Wimmera (last sighting Natimuk in 1962).

Then there were the Presumed Extinct, with several local plants – *Pterostylis despectans* was presumed extinct in the Melbourne area, but found in Langwarrin FFR in the 1980s, and *Corybas despectans* found at Cape Schanck as well as Portland. The glistening salt bush, *Atriplex billardieri*, was recorded at all Victorian ocean beaches but hasn't been seen since 1958.

Once Widespread but now Rare, due to habitat use – for example *Euphrasia scabra* – Yellow eyebright – used to be found in lowland and sub alpine areas, but now only at Bogong. *Diuris punctata* – purple donkey orchid, still at Langwarrin and Mt Eliza railway line areas, but once widespread.

Another category is Just Reach Victoria – plants common in other states but not thought to be in Victoria – such as *Boronia filifolia* (SA), *Eremophila sturtii* (common north of

the Murray) and *Mirbelia rubifolia* (coastal NSW).

Another was Rare but Locally Common – such as *Hibbertia truncata*, only found at Port Campbell area, and Naturally Rare – *Borya mirabilis*, a Pincushion lily, only ever known from 1 site in the Grampians.

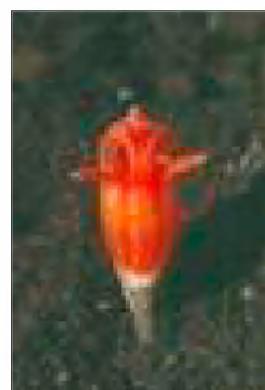
Cryptic Rarity – which may be widespread, but due to its habit of growing and flowering completely hidden by leaf litter is rarely found is *Thismia rodwayi* (fairy lanterns), a tiny non-chlorophyll plant associated with a fungus.

Found after Rare Events- examples such as *Abutilon malvifolium* (a relative of the Chinese lantern), which is only ever found after heavy summer rainfall in the Mallee. It had last been seen at Red Cliffs in 1983, and John took several trips after suitable weather events before he found it. It is a soft woody annual, which grows quickly and flowers at 5 weeks.

Another in this category is *Actinotus forsythia* (a relative of the Flannel flower) which is only found in the first year after wildfire in the Alps. It was discovered in the 1980s, and photographed in 2003 at Nunniong Plateau.

Another category is Confined to Uncommon Habitats – eg a greenhood, *Pterostylis tenuissima* which is only found in alkaline swamps.

John has personally found 4 additions to the Victorian Flora – all rarities- being *Myoporum brevipes*, found in the Mallee, *Levenhookia pusilla* from the Little Desert, *Acacia binervia* – Upper Snowy River, and *Gleichenia rupestris*, a glaucous coral fern, found in East Gippsland. He has a list of 16 to find, 7 of which he has searched for unsuccessfully so far. With John's enthusiasm, knowledge, willingness to travel distances and persistence, you would have to think they will be found one day! - Judy Smart



*Thismia rodwayi* – Photo by John Eichler

## Gordon Rolfe Reserve, Tyabb

### 14<sup>th</sup> November

We often go to Rolfe's Reserve in September when the Wedding Bush is in full flower. This time, in November, the Wedding Bush had finished flowering, and the part of the reserve where most of it grows had been burnt, so we wait with fingers crossed to see how it regenerates.

Most of the flowers had finished, but there was plenty of yellow, in the flowers of Marsh flower, Hibbertias, Slender Stackhousia and Swamp Goodenia. The Salt marsh was really pretty, with the bright reds and greens of the glassworts, plus the pink Rounded Noon-flower and white of creeping brookweed and sea heath in flower.

We saw 43 birds, which was only a few less than usual. The highlight was a pair of White-necked Herons in the garden across the road, along with a Royal Spoonbill, masked lapwings and white ibis.

Another highlight was a tiny Common Froglet, the size of a thumbnail, found by Pat. We wondered too – who was Gordon Rolfe? Google has not been able to help\*.

Afterwards a few of us could not resist going to look for the Eastern Koel reported calling in Wallace Ave Frankston. We could have been called optimists, tragics or obsessives, or all of the above. The Eastern Koel had the last laugh anyway – it was well hidden in a large Moreton Bay Fig in a backyard and could not be enticed out even with calls from phone apps. Indian Mynahs and blackbirds flew in and out, but the Koel characteristically stayed put. Eastern Koels are a large cuckoo which lay their eggs in the nests of much smaller birds. They eat fruit (there was plenty on the Fig) and are a summer migrant from Asia and Papua New Guinea. They don't often go as far south as Melbourne. -

**Judy Smart**

\* Gordon Rolfe owned land in the area which he subdivided in the 1960s. He created and named the surrounding streets, and tried to establish a caravan park, landing ramp and jetty, which would eventually become the Yaringa Boat Harbour.



White-necked Heron – Photo by Diane Peters

Although the Mornington Shire website mentions “Gordon Rolfe Reserve”, it provides no information at all – not even its location. We noticed a new sign at the entrance for the “North Westernport Conservation Reserve” – the Parks Victoria website has a page for this reserve but, apart from saying it was established in June 1997, and comprises 1960.5 hectares, carries no information at all as to its location or boundaries.

Apparently the wetland and some sections of the adjoining land comprise the Gordon Rolfe Reserve, administered by Mornington Shire, while some other parcels are part of the North Westernport Conservation Reserve, administered by Parks Victoria. - **Ed**

#### Bird List For Rolfe's Reserve 14 November 2015

Pacific Black Duck	Royal Spoonbill	Eastern Rosella	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Willie Wagtail	Little Grassbird
Chestnut Teal	Swamp Harrier	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	White-eared Honeyeater	Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	Common Blackbird
Hoary-headed Grebe	Nankeen Kestrel	Superb Fairy-wren	White-naped Honeyeater	Dusky Woodswallow	Common Myna
White-faced Heron	Purple Swamphen	Spotted Pardalote	New Holland Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird	
White-necked Heron	Masked Lapwing	Brown Thornbill	Eastern Yellow Robin	Australian Magpie	
Great Egret	Spotted Turtle-Dove	Red Wattlebird	Grey Shrike-thrush	Little Raven	
Australian White Ibis	Common Bronzewing	Little Wattlebird	Magpie-Lark	Red-browed Finch	
Straw-necked Ibis	Galah	Noisy Miner	Grey Fantail	Welcome Swallow	

## Langwarrin Flora & Fauna Reserve

### 7<sup>th</sup> December

This is the time of year when numbers start to drop off, so a contingent of only three members met at the Warrandyte Rd entrance to the Reserve, on a combined birds and orchids excursion. The first thing that we noticed was the extensive fire protection works being carried out on the northern boundary of the Reserve.

As an alternative to a burn, Parks Victoria has opted for the removal of the understory, leaving the tree cover in place. The understory, dominated by Prickly Tea-tree, with quite a lot of Sallow Wattle and Pittosporum, has been cut down and mulched, with the mulch being left in place, providing a wide band between SEC Break and the houses. Parks believes that this is a better alternative for providing a firebreak – it is certainly a striking sight.



*Understory clearing for fire prevention*  
Photo by Lee Denis

Close to these works, in the mown strip of the Warrandyte Break, grows a large patch of Horned Orchids (*Orthoceras strictum*), together with a few Tongue Orchids (*Cryptostylis* sp) and numerous Slender Onion Orchids (*Microtis parviflora*). Other plants in flower in the mown break included Fringe-lillies, (*Thysanotus tuberosus*), some remaining Purple Flag (*Patersonia occidentalis*), Yellow Rush-lily (*Tricoryne elatior*) and Bulbine Lily (*Bulbine bulbosa*). Within the bushland area we were struck by the

abundant flowering of the Narrow-leaved Peppermints (*Eucalyptus radiata*) – these trees seem to be flowering all over the Peninsula at the moment. The other conspicuous flowers belonged to the Tree Everlasting (*Ozothamnus ferrugineus*), scattered throughout the bushland, and Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*).

On the reservoir were a few flowers of the Yellow Bladderwort (*Utricularia australis*) – nothing like the carpet of flowers there last year.



*Utricularia australis* – Photo by Lee Denis

Birds were generally reluctant to show themselves, with the temperature, although mild in sheltered locations, being rather cool when exposed to the blustery wind. Apart from White and Straw-necked Ibis, and also a Little Pied Cormorant, flying overhead, most birds were seen in the vicinity of the reservoir, with several honeyeaters, scrubwrens, a Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Silvereye, Red-browed Finch and Grey Fantail prominent. The Olive-backed Oriole, which had been heard and seen throughout the month of October, was neither seen nor heard

Butterflies were more abundant, with many Common Brown, Marbled Xenica and several Varied Sword-grass Brown (alighted on Red-fruited Sword-sedge *Gahnia seiberiana*). - Lee Denis

#### Bird List For Langwarrin FFR 7 December 2015

Little Pied Cormorant	Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Red Wattlebird	Eastern Yellow Robin	Australian Magpie
Australian White Ibis	Laughing Kookaburra	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Golden Whistler	Red-browed Finch
Straw-necked Ibis	Superb Fairy-wren	White-eared Honeyeater	Rufous Whistler	Silvereye
Spotted Turtle-Dove	Spotted Pardalote	White-naped Honeyeater	Grey Shrike-thrush	Common Blackbird
Common Bronzewing	White-browed Scrubwren	New Holland Honeyeater	Grey Fantail	
Rainbow Lorikeet	Brown Thornbill	Eastern Spinebill	Grey Butcherbird	

\*\*\*\*\*

## Donald SEANA Camp 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> September

Twice a year the South Eastern Australia Naturalists Association (SEANA), the association for country and city naturalist clubs, organises a camp, hosted by the local club. Before the six of us went to the Donald camp everyone asked – what is there to see at Donald? As it turned out, the answer was – plenty!

Donald is a small town of 1700 population near St Arnaud in the Buloke Shire of the Wimmera. The Donald History and Natural History Group is tiny and it was a big undertaking for them to host 80 plus people. They did it by involving the community to lead excursions and provide the meals, which created a very warm welcome for us. It was good to meet lots of locals over the weekend and learn about life in Donald. The drought had hit hard by late September and the wheat crop had failed for the second year in a row.

The first surprise for us was the lake at the Donald Caravan Park, which had a flock of 30 plus Black-tailed Native Hens, plus black fronted dotterels and parrots.

The two main excursions on Saturday were to Mt Jeffcott, and the York Plains Wetlands. The York Plains excursion followed the Richardson River to the Avon River, which last ran in 2011 after the last drought broke. Both rivers drain into Lake Buloke, which is now dry. Our leader, Lindsay Ezard, is a retired DSE officer with a particular interest in indigenous and settler history, and showed us middens and the Welcome Tree, a group of very large and old intertwined river red gums, the significance of which is uncertain, but Lindsay felt it was a clan border meeting place. The vegetation was interesting too, plains vegetation including the rare turnip copperburr.



*The Welcome Tree – Photo by Judy Smart*

We then went to Walkers Lake, which receives a water allocation from the Wimmera Mallee pipeline. It was an oasis in the dry, with frogs calling and abundant birdlife, including a wood sandpiper.

On Sunday we looked at a private property and a disused granite quarry, seeing a jacky lizard, copperhead snake and blue-winged parrots among other things.

There were other sites we would have loved to see but as with all SEANA camps you couldn't see everything. But at least I know where I want to go next time I am up there. Unfortunately I have lost my bird and plant list from the weekend, so I have had to leave lots of interesting sightings out. - **Judy Smart**

\*\*\*\*\*

### Peninsula Field Naturalists Club Inc

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month with a field trip the following Saturday. Further information and current Programme of Activities can be found at our website.

President:  
Mrs Pat Gomm

Treasurer:  
Ms Linda Edwards

All correspondence to  
Secretary  
Mrs Judy Smart

Annual Subs due July	
Adult	\$25
Concession	\$20

Newsletter edited by Lee Denis